

Charlotte County Hurricane Ian recovery milestones

By Hector Flores

It has been a week of milestones in Charlotte County's Hurricane Ian recovery efforts. We have a long way to go, but I wanted to share some points of progress and assure anyone impacted by the storm that my colleagues and I are working every day to help our community get back to better than normal.

I want to thank the folks at the Florida Department of Emergency Management for including Charlotte County among the counties from which it is now accepting applications from private and commercial property owners who would like assistance for the assessment and removal of qualifying debris, including vehicles.

To apply, visit www.IanDebrisCleanup.com or call 850-961-2002. For information, call the Hurricane Ian Debris hotline 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday- Friday and 9 a.m.-5 p.m., weekends or email IanDebrisCleanup@em.myflorida.com.

Charlotte County's Hurricane Ian debris contractor, AshBritt, passed a major recovery milestone Tuesday when it collected its 1 millionth cubic yard of debris. We estimate, the final debris tally will be about 2.5 million cubic yards and could take several more months.

To view a dashboard featuring a heat map of where debris has been collected, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris.

We continue to operate two temporary debris drop-off sites, one at 7000 Florida St., east of Punta Gorda and another next to the Placida West boat ramp at 12560 Placida Road. Residents can also use the mini-transfer facilities on 19765 Kenilworth Blvd., in Port Charlotte and 7070 Environmental Way in Englewood.

Residents have taken advantage of these debris drop-off sites by the thousands. Between Oct. 6, when the Mid-County Transfer and Recycling Facility reopened and Wednesday, more than 13,000 loads of debris have been dropped off at the four locations.

Waterway debris removal from county waterways began Tuesday, Nov. 2 in the Hayward Canal in El Jobean. Our contractor, Zulu Discovery, began collecting in navigable marine waterways to remove hazards to navigation and will then proceed to freshwater canals and lakes and primary ditches. We'll have a waterway debris removal dashboard up and running once we have more collection data compiled.

Please keep in mind, the contractor will be using county boat ramps to get in and out of the water. Patrons are advised to use caution around the areas where equipment and debris is being handled.

RVs and trailers

The County Commission voted Oct. 25 to allow residents who have been displaced by Hurricane Ian to reside in a trailer or recreational vehicle on their property for up to two years. The code change took effect Friday and expires Nov. 3, 2024.

The county issued guidance to assist residents in complying with regulations on discharge of waste, temporary connection to utilities and other regulations as needed. Visit <https://bit.ly/rvregistration>. For information, call 941-743-1964 or email Zoning@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.

Offices and call center

We have reopened most county offices, many of our parks, two recreation centers and two libraries. Some parks and facilities remain closed while we continue to assess damage or use them for storm-related activities. For a complete list of open and closed facilities and parks, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/activeagain.

Our call center is still operating from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Call 941-833-4000 and 941-743-1320 for response and recovery information.

Readers may reach County Administrator Hector Flores at Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.